

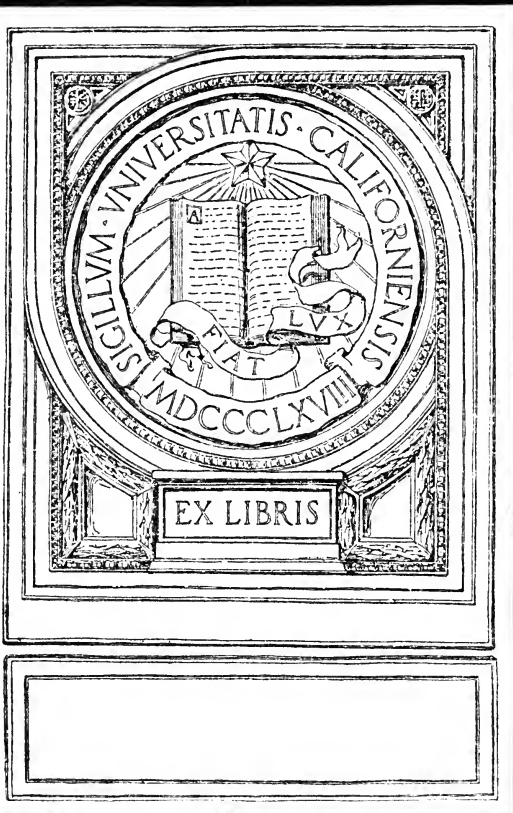
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NATURAL AND COMPARATIVE RELIGION

AN INAUGURAL LECTURE

BY

CLEMENT C. J. WEBB


WILDE LECTURER IN NATURAL AND COMPARATIVE RELIGION

DELIVERED FEBRUARY 2, 1912

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OXFORD
AT THE CLARENDON PRESS
1912

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COMPARATIVE RELIGION



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II

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NATURAL AND COMPARATIVE RELIGION

IT is to the munificence of Dr. Henry Wilde that this University is indebted for the foundation of the Lectureship upon the duties of which I enter to-day, and it is by his desire that its subject is designated as *Natural and Comparative Religion*. This title suggests at first sight that two kinds or species of Religion are intended, both of which the Wilde Lecturer is required to discuss. But, on a closer consideration, the expression Comparative Religion is seen to be appropriate not so much to a kind of Religion as to a way of treating the subject of Religion; just as Comparative Anatomy means the treatment of anatomy by the comparative method, and Comparative Philology the treatment of language by the comparative method, so will Comparative Religion be no more than a compendious equivalent for some such phrase as 'Religion studied by the Comparative method'. Yet it is plain that some antithesis is intended in the title of the Lecture between Natural and Comparative Religion; and the

words of the Statute¹ which prescribes his duties to the Lecturer plainly contemplate two distinct subjects, called respectively Natural and Comparative Religion, as falling within his province. Each of these is in the Statute carefully defined. By 'Natural Religion', we are there told, is meant 'Man's conscious recognition of purposive intelligence and adaptability in the universe of things, on which he is dependent for his continued existence and well-being, and with which he endeavours to live in harmonious relations'. 'Comparative Religion' (so the Statute goes on) 'shall be taken to mean the modes of causation, rites, observances, and other concepts involved in the higher historical religions, as distinguished from the naturalistic ideas and fetichisms of the lower races of mankind.' I think that it is plain from these words that by Comparative Religion the Statute means more than Religion studied by the comparative method; that an indication is given of the kind of Religion which ought so to be studied; and that the kind of Religion thus indicated is *Historical* as distinguished from *Natural* Religion. I am here in the advantageous position in which—if we were to believe in the genuineness of the correspondence given by Aulus Gellius—

¹ *Stat. Univ. Oxon.* 1911, App. C. 7, p. 484.

Alexander was assured by Aristotle that he stood in respect to the philosopher's esoteric books, which were only intelligible to those who, like Alexander himself, had received personal instruction from their author; for I have had the advantage of studying, through the kindness of the Founder of this lecture, an interesting letter in which, when making his generous offer to the University, he explained at length the causes which led him to make it. It is, I think, because for him Natural Religion is *one*, over against the *many* Religions in which men have expressed their various thoughts and fancies about the mind and purpose of which they divined traces in the world around them, that he takes the Comparative method to be applicable only to those *many* Religions, and not to the *one* Natural Religion; for within a class of one member only, no comparisons can be instituted. Hence in the Founder's mind 'Comparative Religion' stands for Historical as opposed to Natural Religion; or, as I should myself prefer to express it, for the History of Religion as opposed to its Philosophy. But we must note that it is not the whole History of Religion with which the Wilde Lecturer is to deal; or rather, in the language of the Statute, not all Religion has, in the proper sense of the word, a History; only the

higher Religions are rightly to be called *historical* Religions at all. As Milton said in his *History of England*¹ of the petty quarrels of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms in Britain with one another: 'Such bickerings to recount, met often in these our writers, what more worth is it than to chronicle the wars of kites and crows, flocking and fighting in the air?' So, it is suggested, the religions of savage tribes, at a stage of development wherein there has as yet dawned upon them no conception of a wider purpose or process to which their own common life is contributory or subordinate, may be considered as not properly *historical* religions but rather as *prehistoric*. The Wilde Lecturer is thus limited by his Statute to the 'higher historical religions', to their history, which *is* history and not mere chronicle, in contrast with, but also in combination with, the philosophy of Religion in general.

But the exclusion from the Wilde Lecturer's purview of the Religions of the Lower Culture (as they are now often called) leaves a large field open to him, of which indeed any particular Wilde Lecturer must be content to touch only upon a part; though this is of the less importance as the Statute provides for a tolerably frequent change of Lecturer.

¹ Book iv, s. a. 800 (*Hist. and Polit. Works*, ed. 1698, p. 78).

There is room for the man of natural science who seeks to discover whether, in the facts to which his special studies have called his attention, a confirmation can be found of that conjecture, which seems continually to arise as it were spontaneously in the minds of men, even if often only anon to be 'clouded with a doubt', that the Power manifested in the universe has the characters of wisdom and goodness. Such a reconsideration, with its possible sequel in a reconstruction, of the famous Argument from Design, after a century of assaults which have left the ancient building to all appearance a heap of ruins, is a thing much needed; and we may, I think, gather from the Founder's Letter above mentioned that the Wilde Lecturer who should venture on such an enterprise would most nearly fulfil the Founder's intention. But there is room not only for such a lecturer as that. There is room also for the philosopher who is mainly concerned with the presuppositions of the religious experience of mankind as it exists in its highest and most reflective forms, and with the bearing of these upon our general view of the world. There is room again for the historian of any one of those Religions which the Statute calls 'the higher historical religions', such as the eminent scholar in whose place I stand, the first Wilde

Lecturer, who has devoted himself to the detailed study of the religion of one of the two ancient peoples to which the religious tradition of modern Europe owes most. There is room also for the investigator of the history and significance of such notions, occurring in all or most of the higher religions, as those of mysticism, of ascetic sanctity, of miracle, of inspiration, of sacrifice, of prayer; and for the student of such phenomena of religious psychology as those to which the attention of many in this country was first called by the brilliant Gifford Lectures of the lamented Professor William James on the *Varieties of Religious Experience*. The facts with which such students are concerned have so far been mainly gathered, perhaps inevitably so, from a very restricted field.¹ It is to be wished that they could be more thoroughly compared with results obtained from a wider survey, and controlled by a closer acquaintance with religious traditions and institutions other than those associated with the 'Evangelical' forms of Christianity, which, by their requirement of certain well-known signs of 'conversion', tend to encourage in their adherents the appearance and cultivation of these.

¹ Cp. the writer's *Problems in the Relations of God and Man*, p. 14.

In older usage, *Natural* Religion was commonly contrasted with *Revealed*; but (as I have elsewhere¹ urged) this antithesis is one which is found on a closer inspection very difficult to maintain. Whether we take Natural Religion as a name for the religious practices *natural* to man, apart from any special instruction which a *revelation* might give, or for the knowledge of God which man may gain from the consideration of the world in which his daily lot is cast, apart from what may come to him in the exceptional ways of miracle, prophecy, and the like, in either case I think we shall find ourselves unable to uphold the possibility of any genuine Revelation without coming to recognize in whatsoever knowledge we have of God, whether we call it *revealed* or no, something which, so far as it is really knowledge of God at all, must be in fact *revealed*. For the supposition that there might be a genuine knowledge of God which should yet not be the effect of God's own activity—not a way in which (to quote words from the Letter of the Founder of this Lecture to which I have already referred) 'the Infinite Intelligence manifests itself to the human intelligence that earnestly and diligently seeks after it'—such a supposition is not really compatible with any notion of God that

¹ *Problems in the Relations of God and Man*, c. 2.

at our present level of intellectual development we could consistently defend. While thus, if the expression 'Revealed Religion' is to have any significance for us, 'Natural Religion' cannot be in principle distinguished from it, on the other hand I can probably count on the agreement of most of my hearers when I say that it is impossible for us to-day so to isolate any alleged system of Revealed Religion from all others as to see in *it* nothing but what is divine and in *them* nothing but what is human, or, maybe, diabolical. The marks of mutual kinship which all religions exhibit are too unmistakable; our conviction as men of science is too deep-rooted that such marks stamp them all as the issues of one process of evolution; while not less deep-rooted is our conviction, as men of religion, that we can recognize goodness where we see it, and that, wherever we see it, it must come from God. But, if we cannot uphold the old distinction of Natural and Revealed Religion in that form, we may yet recognize that those who drew that distinction had in mind, even if they did not carefully discriminate it from other contrasts more or less allied to it, the contrast which our title of Natural and Comparative Religion, as explained in the Statute, seems intended to suggest, the contrast namely between the study of the evidence

afforded by our common human experience of the presence of mind and purpose in that universe of things which encompasses us, from which we have issued, and on which we depend ; and, on the other hand, the study of what has been imagined or divined or thought about this purpose by those who have gone before us, whether as expressed explicitly in speculation and dogma or implicitly in ritual and art. That these two studies cannot indeed be kept apart is acknowledged in the combination of the two in the title of the Wilde Lecturer. Again, I will do now no more than mention what I have elsewhere¹ discussed at length, the fact that a far greater intimacy of connexion unites the study of the content of religious doctrine with the study of its history than unites the study of the sciences which we call mathematical or natural with the study of *their* history. I am aware that this may be explained, and is by some explained, as due to the fact (as it is held to be) that religion involves an illusion incident to a particular stage in the psychological development of mankind, which is left behind us as we advance to a firmer grasp of the genuine principles of connexion among phenomena. For thus, it may be said, there can be

¹ *Problems in the Relations of God and Man*, pp. 59 foll. 191 foll.

no Natural Religion, properly so called, at all, no *science* of theology, no *philosophy* of religion ; nothing but a *history* of illusions and errors, though of illusions and errors which have played (and, unless we be careful, may again play) so important and mischievous a part in human affairs that, as M. Salomon Reinach suggests in his *Orpheus*,¹ the democracy of the future, which will no longer be taught any religious doctrines as *true*, must needs be taught the *history* of them as a measure of precaution, lest from ignorance thereof it should fall once more under their malignant spell. This however is not, in my opinion, the true explanation of a more intimate connexion existing between the study of Religion and the study of its history than exists between the study of the mathematical or natural sciences and the study of their history. It lies rather in the more concrete nature of Religion, which is concerned throughout with the thoughts and actions of real historical societies and individuals, not, like the exact sciences, with abstractions, or like the empirical natural sciences, with uniformities.

It was then very wisely done by the Founder of this Lecture to link together these two studies, that of the Philosophy of Religion and that of its History ; since either of them without the other is in great danger of

¹ § 102.

suffering from their separation. Some of the older exponents of Natural Religion, who did not know and had indeed no means of knowing so much as we do of the history of Religion, were the victims of an illusion which the sister study of the history of Religion by the method of comparing actual Religions together at once dispels.

This was the illusion that there might be found a common stock of Religion, accessible to the unsophisticated reason, which should consist in a belief in certain grand doctrines (such as those of God, Freedom, and Immortality), to which the different actual religions added each of them some doctrine of its own to symbolize or illustrate or enforce these fundamental verities. Here the achievement of philosophical reflection upon Religion, in its effort to winnow the essential from the accidental, the eternal from the perishable, the rational from the fanciful, is taken for the starting-point of the process of which it should rather be considered as the result. Such an error may make us all too little critical of the result, too careless of controlling it by actual reference to the experience which it presupposes, and the record of which—as the title of Mr. Warde Fowler's recent book on the ancient Roman religion, *The Religious Experience of the Roman People*, so well

emphasizes—lies in the actual religious institutions of the different peoples and races of mankind. On the other hand, without the study of what our Statute calls Natural Religion, the study of historical Religion loses significance. How can a man profitably make the history of music the subject of his studies whom music for its own sake does not interest? and how can music for its own sake interest one to whom an ear for music has been denied by nature? But is it any more possible, we may ask, for a man who has no religious experiences of his own to give the subject a *meaning* to him, to take the history of Religion for his theme with any hope of good success? In a well-known passage of the Introduction to his *Vie de Jésus* Renan has said¹ that for a man to be qualified to recite the history of a Religion, he must in the first place *have* believed in it, since otherwise he will not understand by what means it has charmed and satisfied the human conscience (*charmé et satisfait la conscience humaine*); but in the second place he must have ceased to believe it in an absolute sense (*d'une manière absolue*), for absolute faith is (he observes) incompatible with a sincere treatment of its history. That Renan is right in his first requirement I have no doubt; nor do I question that he is right

¹ *Vie de Jésus*, Introd.

in his second requirement also, if by having ceased to believe it '*d'une manière absolue*' is meant only that the would-be historian's faith in it must have passed beyond the stage at which faith is incompatible with reflection and discrimination. The faith of the historian of a religion must not be mere unquestioning acceptance of a formula; it must not be mere submission of himself to a wave of emotion. No doubt even where faith seems describable as unquestioning acceptance of a formula, as submission to a wave of emotion, there is in fact some kind of thinking already present in it. This is implied in the believer's recognition and acknowledgement of the authority from whom he accepts the formula, in the consciousness of something higher than ourselves upon which he feels himself to be dependent, or which he feels to have taken possession of him. Nevertheless, such a faith as this would not qualify a man to become the historian of his religion. To be that he must have passed into the stage of criticism and reflection; but he must not have ceased to believe in religion altogether, or he will be like a man who has utterly lost his appreciation of music endeavouring to write the history of a school of musicians.

If he has ceased to believe in the particular religion whose history he proposes to write, it must be because

he has come to find in some higher religious experience the more perfect fulfilment of what he formerly sought, and seemed partially or imperfectly to have found in the religion which he has left. It must not be because he has found all Religion to be in its essence an illusion.

It may perhaps be retorted: Could a man not write the history of Magic or of Astrology without believing in them or indeed ever having believed in them? I should answer: Perhaps; but not without having enough sympathy with them to know (if I may so speak) what men were *after* in striving to master nature by spells or to read their fates in the stars; enough sympathy to understand, in Renan's phrase, how Magic and Astrology have 'charmed and satisfied', so far as they can be said to have done so, the souls and minds of men. Apart from such sympathy, the history will be written merely from the outside. It may amass useful material, but it will fail in an essential point of being what it professes to be. The question who then in our generation is qualified to write the history of Magic or of Astrology involves the question—What were the demands of the human spirit which the belief in Magic or the belief in Astrology essayed to satisfy, and where (if anywhere) are these same needs now

more perfectly met? With respect to Magic I have made some attempt elsewhere¹ I will not say to deal with but at least to touch upon this question; with respect to Astrology I will content myself here with observing that a faith in stellar influences has sometimes been the form taken by the conviction of the subordination of human affairs to the uniformity of nature, in opposition to a belief in incalculable intervention by the free will either of man or of spiritual beings superior to man. Even in the middle of the seventeenth century when George Fox, in describing a temptation which beset him to believe that there was no God but that all things came by nature, says 'the elements and the stars came over me',² he was probably thinking as much of Astrology as of the truly scientific doctrine which we distinguish from it by the name of Astronomy. But I cannot attempt now to pursue this question further.

It is an important distinction between what are sometimes called the Religions of the Lower Culture—religions which the Statute has excluded from the purview of the Wilde Lecturer—and those which the Statute calls the 'higher historical Religions' that the study of the former, fruitful in important results

¹ *Problems in the Relations of God and Man*, pp. 194 foll.

² *Journal*, 1648 (ed. Armistead, i. 65).

for our knowledge of mankind as it is daily proving itself to be, is always subject to the disadvantage that we cannot well expect to enter into their inner life, as we may, through literature or through personal intercourse with their followers, hope to enter into that of the 'higher historical religions'. Even with respect to the Religions of the Lower Culture however, it will, I think, be true to say that the realization of a genuine continuity between our own religious experience and that which we infer from their rites and customs to belong or have belonged to the primitive or savage peoples whom we are studying, is a requisite for the most profitable investigation of uncivilized religion. We may justly congratulate ourselves that this is constantly realized and clearly insisted upon, both in his valuable work on *The Threshold of Religion* and elsewhere, by the chief representative of these studies among us here in Oxford. But where Religion has reached the stage at which the personal piety of individuals can express itself in terms such that we could in part at least adopt them for ourselves, there we have the possibility of a more thorough comprehension of our subject than we can hope for in the case of the Religions of the Lower Culture. And here our University of Oxford now offers great opportunities.

The analogy of organic evolution would lead us to expect the more highly developed religions to exhibit, as compared with the less highly developed, a far greater internal diversity or, as Herbert Spencer would have said, heterogeneity. A religion like the Christian is so rich in the variety of its forms that even without travelling beyond the limits of Christendom the student can find ample opportunities for the comparison of different types of piety and of doctrine. What could be more full of interest than a thorough comparison of Catholic and Protestant Christianity with one another? Yet such a comparison has rarely been undertaken except in the spirit of an advocate on the one side or the other. Even if we were to go no further than the Church of England, to which until the middle of the last century membership of this University had for some two hundred years been reserved, it would be possible to learn much from the comparison among ourselves of the men and the schools which have arisen within her fold. To mention only a few names at random, we might compare George Herbert's sacred poetry with William Cowper's, William Law's philosophy of religion with Joseph Butler's, John Henry Newman's preaching with Frederick Robertson's, John Mason Neale's religious romanticism with Charles Kingsley's. Thus

even before the repeal of the Test Acts had opened our doors the materials for a comparative study of religion would not have been altogether lacking in our University, among whose sons might have been found the spiritual followers or comrades of such men as these—all of them Anglicans though not all of them Oxford men. But now, since our doors have been opened, Oxford has not only welcomed individuals taught by other Churches and trained in other creeds, but has seen springing up under her shadow colleges and hostels, in real even where not in formal union with herself, which are alive with the religious life proper to religious communities both old and new—from ancient orders which Oxford knew in her mediaeval days to societies which, like the Society of Jesus and the churches which inherit the traditions of Puritan Nonconformity and Independency, trace their origin to the great religious movement of the sixteenth century. Moreover, to the hospitality of the foundation which, before it found a home among us here, was adorned by the illustrious name of James Martineau, we owe it that religious men who do not bear the Christian name are encouraged, without abjuring their religious traditions, to undertake the study of religion in Oxford side by side with Christians, and to search their own and the Christian Scriptures

for any testimony borne therein to those truths which, from whatever quarter their light may dawn, are found, when once it has dawned, to be in the poet's words ¹—

truths that wake
To perish never.

The tradition of Oxford as a home not of sound learning only but of religion, is, to my mind, worthily maintained when men of all races seek her, to find in her no mere seat of secular learning, where men, disillusioned and perforce content with the things that do appear may study the world's religions as they might study the ruins of a vanished age preserved in an archaeological museum ; but rather to find a place where men to whom the aspiration after a life not of this world is no mere dream, may meet with those religions alive in flesh and blood, proving their vitality, as religions which are alive must prove it, by earnest controversy and contention about the truth ; yet carried on in a spirit of good will, as of men who in their very controversies are 'comparing spiritual things with spiritual' ² and are desirous of discovering in the words of every true-hearted teacher of things divine, whether ancient or modern, 'what the Spirit

¹ Wordsworth's *Intimations of Immortality*.

² 1 Cor. ii. 13.

which was in them did signify'¹ concerning the issue of that long and tragic struggle which we call the history of Religion, the history of God's revelation of Himself to man in man, that issue of which the Hebrew prophet dreamed when he spoke of a day to come when 'the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea'.²

Thus it is with the happiest auguries for the future that the history of Religion can now be studied at Oxford by the comparative method. Of the systematic use in recent times of this method in the study of Religion a famous Professor of this University has often been regarded as the chief pioneer. Chantepie de la Saussaye, in his *Manual of the Science of Religion*,³ says, 'Nobody has a greater claim to be called the founder of that science than Friedrich Max Müller.' Tiele opens his *Elements of the Science of Religion*⁴ with a reference to Max Müller's Royal Institution lectures on the Science of Religion, and adds, 'As the foundation of this new science had only just been laid, he could but submit the plan of the building to his readers and hearers.' 'How powerfully', he continues, 'he afterwards contributed to the building up of our science, I need hardly

¹ 1 Pet. i. 11.

³ i, p. 1.

² Is. xi. 9.

⁴ Engl. Tr., p. 6.

remind you.' These distinguished men did not speak thus of Max Müller without having weighed the words they were using. They were well aware that neither in his treatment of mythology as a 'disease of language', nor in his use of the solar myth as a key to the meaning of a disproportionately large number of religious legends, nor in what might, with only a slight exaggeration, be described as his almost exclusive attention to the religious history of the Aryan-speaking peoples, had our first Professor of Comparative Philology hit upon the paths which students of the science for which he and they cared so greatly were afterwards to follow. But they knew also the stimulus and encouragement which the interest excited by his brilliant writings and attractive personality had given to their chosen studies; they remembered his initiation of the great design of translating the Sacred Books of the East, a work so indispensable to the study of the history of the higher religions; and they gave him, with justice, such praise as the devotees of the inductive sciences have rarely grudged to Francis Bacon, notwithstanding the defects of his method and the cold reception which he gave to some of the most important discoveries of his own age. But if in the commemoration of Max

Müller as a pioneer of the comparative study of religion, we have inevitably been reminded of the fact that this study has come, to a great extent, to move along other lines than those which he marked out for it, we cannot forget that this very change is largely due to that remarkable advance in the study of the culture of primitive man which is so intimately bound up with the work of another Professor of this University—like Max Müller himself, not a gremial but an adopted son of Oxford. Sir Edward Tylor, as we must now call him, no longer makes his home among us, but the affection of all who knew him, the respect (as was publicly acknowledged at the beginning of this year) of his country, and the gratitude of all who here and elsewhere study the history of religion, follow him into the retirement which his long labours in the cause of learning have so well deserved.

If the achievements of the past and the dispositions of the present are then, as we have seen, of happy augury for the study of the history of religion in Oxford, the memories which haunt her Schools are not less inspiring to students of its philosophy. Here Butler was bred, and hither Berkeley came to end his days and lay his bones in our cathedral church. But I will not embark on a catalogue of names. I will

content myself with dwelling on three of more recent date. No man was more characteristically a son of Oxford than John Henry Newman. The snap-dragon on the walls of Trinity¹ had proved itself a false prophet, and he was going out from among us when by the publication of his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* he made his first contribution—he had long been a stranger to our city when in his *Grammar of Assent* he made his second—to the philosophical study of religion. But the spirit of the Oxford of his day lives in these books, in the scrupulous yet unpedantic subtlety of their language, in the chastened and austere rhythm of their style. In them Newman reveals a sensitiveness to the secret problems of intellectual and spiritual growth, in the individual and in society, which stamps him as the unwitting, not to say the unwilling son of the spirit of an age which was soon to swear by the blessed word Evolution, to substitute the Social Organism for the Social Contract, and to seek the roots of mental life below the threshold of consciousness. It was not from Newman that the world, or even England, was to learn these lessons ; but a generation which had learned them elsewhere was to find them already in his writings, and thus after his death the man who boasted that ‘for thirty, forty,

¹ *Apologia*, ed. 1864, p. 309.

fifty years he had resisted to the best of his power the spirit of liberalism in religion' became the inspirer of a great Liberal movement in the Church of his adoption. But it is to be remembered that this Liberal movement in the Church of his adoption has not conformed to his definition of Liberalism in religion as 'the doctrine that there is no positive truth in religion, but that one creed is as good as another'. It has been inspired by a genuine attachment to one religion; but it has taken seriously the thought of Development in Doctrine and the truth which Newman himself had enunciated in his early book on the *Arians of the Fourth Century* that 'there is something true and divinely revealed in every religion all over the world', that 'Revelation properly speaking is a universal, not a local gift'.¹ The Oxford movement of which Newman was in his time the most striking figure has sometimes been described as no more than a backwater in relation to the general European movement of the age; and in some respects this view of it is not wholly unjust. But the original genius of Newman gives to his philosophical reflection on the religious life, which was so strong and deep in himself, a genuine value of its own, which is not diminished by its solitary independence and its detachment from

¹ p. 82; quoted by Mr. W. S. Lilly in *D.N.B.*

some of the chief influences which determined the main currents of thought in his day.

Very different from Newman, yet not less characteristically a son of Oxford, was the great Balliol teacher of post-Tractarian days, Thomas Hill Green. He was no stranger, as Newman had been, to the work of the great German idealists ; he had learned from them, and has passed with many for their disciple ; but his thinking about religion, like his philosophy in general, was none the less for that most truly his own, and, like Newman, in thinking about Religion, he was thinking about a kind of experience which he enjoyed himself in full measure.

It is with hesitation that I mention lastly, in the presence of many who knew him far better than I, the name of Edward Caird. But even those of us who stood at a distance were sensible that in the late Master of Balliol we had among us one whose thought about Religion, while it deserved, if ever thought did, the honourable name of 'free thought', was always the thought of one who knew in his own soul as present life and power the thing which was its object.

In the University which these great men have adorned, the study of the Philosophy of Religion is at home ; it has the encouragement and the spur of

great examples and of a noble tradition. However unworthy a Wilde Lecturer may know himself to be of appearing in such company, the Founder of the Lecture may well have hoped that the influences of the place would be favourable to the end which he desired by his foundation to promote—‘the increase’ (to quote his own words once more) ‘of true religious knowledge’.

To this description no mere knowledge about religion from the outside will answer, but only a knowledge of religion such as is inseparable from some measure of religious experience in him who has it. Nor will even such a knowledge satisfy the description which, content with a *merely* religious experience, does not seek to bring it in reflection into relation with other kinds of experience. It is characteristic of the religious sentiment, as I have elsewhere¹ attempted to show, that it is always a sentiment directed towards an object which is yet not *merely* its object, but claims to be somehow the fundamental or ultimate reality. A thinker therefore who is in earnest with his religious knowledge can never be in the long run content with its isolation from other departments of knowledge. To be truly religious knowledge at all, it

¹ *Problems in the Relations of God and Man*, pp. 142 foll.

must be knowledge of what is the very heart of reality ; and hence whatever else we know about reality must have a direct bearing upon it. The ideal of 'true religious knowledge' then, in this sense, is an ideal which we shall not look to attain to-day or to-morrow, or the day after—no, not in our lifetime, though we should see the years of Methuselah. But all genuine knowledge about religion, which is not merely about religion but is itself religious, is a real step-forward in the direction towards which the Founder of this Lecture would have us set our faces.

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